The Hampden Hippocrat

A Bulletin for the Hampden District of the Massachusetts Medical Society

VOLUME VIII SPRING, 1952 2

SANS TEETH — SANS EVERYTHING?

Statistitians have come up with the finding that the number of old people has doubled in this country during the past twenty-five years. The increase is now approximately 300,000 a year. By 1950 this group constituted over 8 per cent of the population. That means we are living in an altered world with new problems that now are calling for new solutions in a number of fields.

Compulsory retirement from industry at age 65 is leaving many experienced workmen with nothing to do. That is bad not only for the individual, but a loss to industry as well. Churches and communities must now keep the oldsters occupied too for social and economic reasons, and to benefit from their ripened experience. Loneliness can be terrible. The Golden Age Clubs have made a good beginning.

Politically the balance is swinging away from immaturity. Will this bring government back to a more stable moral plane? The Romans in their heyday depended on the elder statesmen. Certainly Dr. Townsend's claims soon may be heard more forcefully in the land.

In the field of medicine, Geriatrics is demanding greater interest, particularly along the lines of rehabilitation and purposeful occupation. Hands that have enjoyed a lifetime of usefulness do not relish idleness. It is bad psychically as well as physically. Young parctitioners might well take notice of this trend in case the older physicians themselves are too rigidly fixed to learn new tricks.

From Moscow, characteristically, comes the news that the Soviet Union has added superlongevity to its growing list of priorities. Pravda claims that Russians are living much longer than unfortunates who must dwell under the handicaps of Capitalism. Cited as proof is a collective farmer who boasts that he has reached pier 145!* But are not the nonconformers whose lives are prematurely shortened behind that durable drapery eliminated from computation? Isvestia answereth not.

S. Q. Lapius

*Springfield Union January 5, 1952.

HAMPDEN DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of our Society will be held April 22 at the new Soldier's Home in Holyoke. This meeting will continue our "theme" for the year which is to spread knowledge of and stimulate interest in the important medical matters which affect our district.

The annual business will be conducted. There will be time for discussion. A good dinner and some fun are expected. The Home will be nearly ready to open for patients but none will be there. This will be an ideal time to inspect this beautiful plant, to see some new ideas in hospital construction and to find out what is going to be done there.

James L. Smead

Hampden Hippocrat

"Life is short and art is long, the occasion fleeting, experience fallacious and judgment difficult." —Hippocrates, 430 B.C.

This Issue 500 Copies

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LINGER AND LIVE?

Progress made since the prehistoric days in prolonging human life is enlightening — and encouraging. Enough evidence has been unearthed in dented skulls and fossil bones from the bronze age to warrant the conclusion that 18 years was the average at which men died in that remote time. Few individuals lived more than 40 years. When rising civilization began to improve foods and housing as in ancient Greece, the figures also improved. Later in Rome, burial inscriptions indicated an average of 22 years.

During the Middle Ages 33 years was the record, but progress was slowed down for two Centuries or more by the recession of culture. In 1854 the average stood at 40.9 years in England and Wales, and 49.2 years at the beginning of the 20th Century here in the United States. But the astounding advances of the past 50 years have outdone the greatest prophesied expectations. The present average length of life here is 68.2 years. Dr. Louis I. Dublin, a vice-president and statistician of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., who supplied this information* predicts that the rise will continue so that the figure will excel 70 years before 1960.

The world record of Methuselah however is quite apt to stand, at least under present conditions. Who in his right mind but existing in a world devoid of morality would add another decade to his life's span? Without a living and moving moral consciousness, how infinitely depressing would be a sentence for life of 969 years!

Over two thousand years ago a question was asked that bears directly on this problem, "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" and an assertion made, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it".*

*See Medical Reader, this issue.
*Mark 8:36.

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MORE "MIRACLE" DRUGS

We were fortunate the other evening in hearing Dr. David Bosworth, director of Bone and Joint Surgery at Sea View Hospital, Staten Island, give his views on the subject of Marsalid, as a "cure" for tuberculosis. The Sea View Hospital offers unrivalled opportunities for judging the merits of any tuberculosis therapy, for, as Dr. Bosworth said, it is the "ashcan" of New York City's destitute tubercular citizens in the advanced stages of their disease.

Out of the 1400 cases cared for in the institution, 125 cases who were definitely on their way out having exhausted everything that medicial science could offer, were selected for Marsalid therapy. These cases shown on a screen, presented the disease in all its forms, the body riddled with discharging sinuses, worn to skin and bone, and expression of hopeless apathy in the face. A few days after Marsalid was begun, there was a noticeable change, the sinuses began to close, the discharge became much less, cultures became sterile, the body began to fill out, patients became actually fat, an expression of animation and even happiness had completely displaced the hopelessness of only a few weeks before. There was every evidence that a curative process had set in, and it is no wonder that those who saw these things happen were enthusiastic to the point of indiscretion. But for reasons which have not yet been determined, the improvement began to reverse itself, cultures began to come back positive, the down hill progress was resumed and death occurred despite continuance of the drug. Six of the original 125 have continued to show beneficial results with healing of the sinuses. So far as is at present known the dose is undetermined, and no one knows what damage it may cause coincident with its apparent benefits. One statement of great interest made by Dr. Bosworth was that the drug might be of great value in the treatment of tubercular meningitis, for the most part a fatal disease. He also reminded his audience that Streptomycin, the wonder drug of a few years ago is having remarkably beneficial effects in halting tuberculosis.

There are three drugs in this class all having a similar background in that they are derived from Nicotinic acid. Lederle calls it Aldinamide, LaRoche make Romiform and Merck produces Marsalid. All are under investigation at different hospitals, and the earlier enthusiasm is now being replaced by more considered judgement, as time is taken to review the picture. Perhaps one very good result of "jumping the gun" is that drug houses like Merck have learned that they are partners of the medical profession and that medical ethics does not encourage advertising of any remedy in advance of clinical investigation and reliable reports as to its usage. What we have in Marsalid and the others is a new weapon of uncertain usefulness in the treatment of tuberculosis. But at the moment its limited amount does not justify its use except in cases where all else has failed.

In view of the number of new drugs coming to the front insufficiently sponsored by reliable experience, we call attention to the report of a case of Streptomycin poisoning written by the victim for the N. E. Journal of March 20, entitled Living Without A Balancing Mechanism. The subject is a physician who underwent a prolonged course of streptomycin therapy for a supposedly tubercular arthritis at a time when the drug was new and its effects unknown.

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The loss of vestibular function was noticed two and one half months after the drug was started and although the injections were immediately discontinued, in the four years since there has been no recovery.

SPRING CLINICAL ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, April 23, 1952

MASSACHUSETTS ACADEMY OF GENERAL PRACTICE

Springfield, Massachuseets

Morning Clinical Session

Springfield Hospital

9:15—9:35 "Metabolism of Iron and the Management of Its Deficiency". DR. HOWARD P. KENNEDY.

9:35—9:55 "Unexpected Dividends from Chest X-Rays". DR. W. FENN HOYT.

9:55—10:15 "Intramedullary Fixation of Fractures". DR. ELMER E. FRANSEEN.

10:15—10:35 "The Management of Bronchial Asthma". DR. H. BERNARD TILLMAN.

10:35—10:55 "Degenerative Changes in Diabetes Mellitus". DR. JACOB I. WEISMAN.

10:55—11:15 "Spinal Anesthesia in Obstetrics". DR. HARRY L. STRACHAN.

11:15—11:25 Intermission.

11:25—12:15 "Psychosomatic Medicine-A Demonstration of the Therapeutic Interview". DR. CALVERT STEIN.

LUNCHEON and AFTERNOON SESSION

Hotel Kimball

STUART COSGRIFF, M. D. Presbyterian Hospital, New York City. "The Use of Anticoagulants".

MALVIN WHITE, M. D. Boston Massachusetts "The Role of Plastic Surgery in the Treatment of ommon Disorders in General Practice".

DINNER

JEROME L. LEON, M. D. Riverside Hospital, New York City. (Medical Director) "Narcotics and the Adolescent".

There will be a special program for the doctors' wives.

Reservations should be made early and personally at Hotel Kimball.

CHEESE CAKE

According to Prof. Wilbor O. Wilson, U. of Cal., Col. of Agr., most chickens wear bare legs to keep cool, — also combs and wattles. 'Me too' for co-eds?

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BON VOYAGE

Whoever is looking forward to Summer relaxation could do no better than take to the sea, preferably in a small sailer or a motor-driven vessel to cruise among the Elizabeth Islands. A swim in the crystal clear water at Quick's Hole, followed by a sunbath on the perfect beach and lobsters grilled behind the dunes, will knit up ravelled sleeves very satisfyingly indeed. For those who have never enjoyed such recreation, a reminder from the editorial page of the New York Tribune will verify the assertion. Those who have been there will enjoy the reminder even more:

'—AND NONAMESSET
Cuttyhunk, Penikese,
Nashawena, Pasquanese,
Naushon, Weepecket,
Uncatena and Nonamesset.

These, as every sailorman who gets to the eastward of Point Judith knows, are the names, in west to east order, of the Elizabeth Islands, that pleasant chain of sandy beaches, woods and moorland which divides Buzzard's Bay from Vineyard Sound. They are themselves divided by the Holes, of which Wood's Hole is the most celebrated; they contain the romantically named Tarpaulin Cove, and Cuttyhunk Harbor is to many the sweetest small-boat anchorage this side the Cape. The old memory jingle marshals their names euphoniously, and at first glance it might seem that it represents about all that can be done with them.

But Mr. Alexander Crosby Brown in a note in "The American Neptune," reports otherwise. Having incautiously committed the above version to print (it had come down through three generations in his family) he was assailed from all sides with allegations of inaccuracy and heresay. His spellings were challenged (several variants were given of Pasquanese, which is really Pasque Island on the charts) while one version, sacrificing rhyme to exactitude, insisted on the Weepeckets, since there are actually three of them. Out of folklore and family archives there came no less than seven complete variants on Mr. Brown's theme; he reports them and then, in a mood of utter distraction, abandons the subject, willing to give the whole lot back to Wamsutta, the Sachem of the Wampanoags, who may have been responsible for naming them in the first place. Maybe there is an original, "authentic" version. But anyway, they are mighty nice islands.'

DISTAFF DOINGS

The Hampden District Medical Society Auxiliary sponsored a dessert bridge fashion show on February 7th at the Longmeadow Community House for the benefit of the Nurses' Recruitment Fund. A capacity audience filled the flower-decorated auditorium. The gowns, suits, and furs were modelled to the strains of organ music by auxiliary members against a background of forsythia and spring flowers. About six hundred dollars was added to the Nurses' Fund after taxes and expenses were deducted. A series of recruitment teas will be given in the hospitals in the area which includes Holyoke Hospital and Providence Hospital in Holyoke and the Mercy and Springfield hospitals in Springfield.

Mrs. Roger Cheney is president and Mrs. Martin Gaynor general program chairman.

Plans for the annual meeting in April includes luncheon at the Yankee Pedlar in Holyoke and election of officers. Mrs. William G. LeBrecht, the State President, and Mrs. George McCabe, president-elect, will be the guests of honor.

Mrs. Stanley R. Dixon

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Dear Hippocrat:

If it is proper for the President of the A. M. A. to discuss abuse of fees editorially, on a national level with a case in point quoted, it is equally important that we at the local level take like cognizance. An uncomplicated fracture of a tibia and fibula in the day time is not worth $450.00 in anybodys money. But it has been paid here. Who are these gods from on high who continually combat by their fees, the good work of perhaps five percent of our membership who work day after day in keeping the state out of medicine.

Why it is "verboten" to mention the overcharging of a few when the Blue Shield which we doctors sponsored in spirit and in subsidy was incorporated to help people pay reasonable fees.

Then we come to free ward service payments by Blue Shield to the doctors on service. Some endorse their fees over to the hospitals, or to other interests. Twelve such Massachusetts hospitals received from 1948 through November 1951, $359,071 of Blue Shield money. But others have kept the payment themselves since the hospital regulations permits this elsewhere. There was a time when physicians glady gave their services on the wards and were well rewarded by the experience thus obtained.

It is said that teaching hospitals need the cases in the wards. What hospital isn't a teaching hospital? Until this drain was attached to the Blue Shield payment sheet, it was doing well financially and able to add to its service, with the promise of increased fees. It is now said to be headed for a deficit, or an increase in rates. "Physician, heal thyself" is so worn thin. Will he?

Regusted

"Dear Regusted:"

We hope your letter will lead others to "sound off" on their pet peeves. Is not your fee complaint a fit subject for our District and Academy censors to work on?

Perhaps a confidential report from them would show they are soliciting and tabulating complaints in order to discipline the offenders that can be found throughout the ranks of the Hampden District. More queries such as your should have an impelling effect.

Certainly medical fees should not be governed by the law of supply and demand, but by the actual worth and need of the services without depleting the patient's life savings. As a rule, it should be less than the law would allow — never more.

The Blue Shield matter is being considered by a special committee for action by the Council of Massachusetts Medical Society. Their recommendations should be of great interest.

Your interestedly,
Hippocrat

YOUR VOTE
CAN HELP MAKE HISTORY
*
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THE MEDICAL READER

According to Russell Collins, former City Editor of the Springfield Daily News, the late Sherman Bowles was a rare individual combining wit and charm with a keen sense of business. He was a shy man who many did not know. 'I once asked him' wrote Collins 'what he really wanted out of life. I must have caught him in a rare moment because he usually would not take anyone into his confidence about personal matters. He looked at me for a long moment and then out of the window. It was Spring and the trees were just blossoming.

"I'd like to go back and finish reading Goethe", he said. He looked at the trees and then at the blue sky behind them. He sighed and brought his thoughts back to the room. "But I'll probably never get around to it".'

If Sherman Bowles could regret unfinished reading, no doubt many medical men would express similar regrets if they were asked. In careers as time consuming as newspaper publishing and the practice of medicine, these deficits can be met only by regular daily allotments of time. There are numbers of modern editions of the classics such as Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and Homer's epic poems that eliminate the drudgery of Old English and the original Greek thus enabling readers to make the most of shortened hours, (many students have been partial to trots!) Even new translations of Holy Writ have been provided for readers, lay or medical, that would make good Lenten reading. The schoolboy German of too many of us would need similar aid if we were to take up Goethe belatedly, let alone finish reading the works of a stimulating thinker whose tenets are applicable to the solution of many man's problems in this Twentieth Century.

* * * * *

The Atlantic Monthly has been publishing a series of essays entitled When Doctors Are Patients, written by the doctors themselves, soon to appear in bookform. We like the last one articularly by Dr. Abraham Myerson, but they all repay reading and can well be recommended to our patients who are apt to think that all doctors bear a charmed life.

* * * *

Louis I. Dublin, Ph. D., in collaboration with Mortimer Spiegelman have brought the statistics of life expectancy up to date for the Metropolian Life Insurance Company of New York, in the recently published volume, 'The Facts of Life from Birth to Death', (461 p. m., Macmillan 1951) you will find them draped against the background of history, with numerous graphs and an adequate index. The book is composed for the general reader in the form of questions and answers in short paragraphs to make the dry statistics palatable, but the facts are there for professional searchers who may be interested.

For example, — 'do premarital laws depress the marriage rate? How many peaple die in the world annually? Is tuberculosis an occupational hazard? Has there been any change in longevity of Presidents of the United States', from the celerated Father of his Country whose end was precipitated by a conscientious practioner of medicine by bloodletting, to the present incumbent who says enough is more than enough?

One might surmise that the longer lives of our first eight Presidents reflected the effects of calmer days undisturbed

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by the multifarious distractions that have arisen to complicate existance since Teddy with the Big Stick instroduced the 'Strenuous Life'. But the only evidence that Dr. Dublin can find to corroborate the common belief that increasing burdens of office are taking a greater toll from the occupants of the White House, is perhaps the fact that defeated candidates for the Presidency have lived longer on the average than those who won the elections.

The other answers, — and there are hundreds more — must be left for individual research.

BLACK IS BLACK IS BLACK

YEAR ENDING, MARCH 31, 1952

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